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# IMMORTALITY

THE DREW LECTURE

DELIVERED OCTOBER 11, 1912

BY

R. H. CHARLES, D.LITT., D.D.

SPEAKER'S LECTURER IN BIBLICAL STUDIES

FELLOW OF MERTON COLLEGE, OXFORD

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# THE RISE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE BELIEF IN A FUTURE LIFE IN JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY

BEING

THE DREW LECTURE ON IMMORTALITY, 1912

IT was with much pleasure that I accepted the invitation to deliver this year the Drew Lecture on Immortality. The invitation came to me overwhelmed with the pressure of tasks in various stages of incompleteness, but the practical character of the subject overcame my reluctance to add to the freight of an already overladen ship. For though I propose to take you speedily over the intellectual changes of outlook on this subject in Israel and a few of its developments in Christianity, you are not to regard this study as one of merely academic interest. Nay, the subject is a living one: it affects the well-being not only of the individual man, but of Churches and religious systems, of nations and races. The loss of such a belief would be tragic in every department of human life, for, as we shall see later, it would be a proof of spiritual declension. I will quote the judgements of two very dissimilar men on this question. Emerson writes: 'No sooner do we try to get rid of the idea of Immortality—than Pessimism raises its head . . . human griefs seem little worth assuaging; human happiness too paltry (at the best) to be worth increasing. The whole moral world is reduced to a point. Good and evil, right and wrong, become infinitesimal matters. The affections die away—die of their own conscious feebleness and uselessness. A moral paralysis creeps over us.'<sup>1</sup>

The question not only of academic but of practical interest.

<sup>1</sup> *Natural Religion*, Postscript.

Still more significant perhaps are the words of Ernest Renan: 'The day', he writes, 'in which the belief in an after life shall vanish from the earth will witness a terrific moral and spiritual decadence. Some of us perhaps might do without it, provided only that others held it fast. But there is no lever capable of raising an entire people if once they have lost their faith in the immortality of the soul.'<sup>1</sup>

Since, then, the subject is a living and practical one, every circumstance connected with the origin and every phase in the development of this doctrine cannot fail to be of the deepest moment; for since this belief in Israel arose not in the abstract reasonings of the schools, but in the mortal strife of spiritual experience, it cannot be a matter of merely historical interest, but is full of practical importance for all who are seeking to live the life, not of nature's ephemera, but of the children of God. For in this progress from the complete absence of such a belief in Israel to a positive and spiritual faith in a blessed future life, all alike can read writ large in the page of history from 800 B. C. to A. D. 100 a transcript of their own spiritual struggles as they toil up the steep ascent that leads to the city of God. It is a national Pilgrim's Progress, which every child of man must repeat in his own spiritual experience, whatever his mental or moral endowments may be, and the goal is as assured to the wayfaring man, though a fool, as it is to the learned and the wise. Having thus recognized the importance of our subject it is advisable, before we enter on the history of the religious development in Israel, to define some of the terms that will recur constantly as we proceed, such as Apocalyptic, Eschatology, and Prophecy.

Definition of  
the terms—  
Apocalyptic

First of all we must distinguish Apocalyptic and Eschatology. These two terms are in part synonymous.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Encycl. Brit.* xxiv. 339.



Eschatology is strictly the doctrine of the last things: and as such can form a division of Apocalyptic or of Prophecy, and so we have an Eschatology of Apocalyptic and an Eschatology of Prophecy. But Apocalyptic takes an infinitely wider sweep. It embraces within its purview things past, present, and to come. But it is no mere history of such things. It seeks to get behind the surface and penetrate to the essence of events: to estimate them as they appear, not from the human but from the divine standpoint.

To a limited extent Prophecy and Apocalyptic occupy the same field, but the scope of the latter is incomparably greater. Prophecy devotes itself to the present, and only to the future as rising organically out of the present. It concerns itself mainly with the nation and its hopes and gave birth in due time to the national hope of a Messianic kingdom. Apocalyptic, on the other hand, is interested in the present, but not so much in it as a thing in itself, but as a stage in the development of the divine plan. With this end in view it sketched in outline the history of the world and of mankind, the origin of evil and its course, the ultimate triumph of righteousness and the final consummation of all things. It was thus, in short, a Semitic philosophy of religion, and as such it was ever asking: Whence? wherefore? whither?

Prophecy  
and  
Apocalyptic.

In the next place it was in itself intensely ethical: in every crisis of the world's history, when the good cause was overthrown and the wrong triumphant, its insistent demand was ever: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? In all the more notable books of this literature this ethical element is conspicuously to the front. Moreover, the ethical teaching in this literature is a vast advance on that of the Old Testament, and forms the indispensable link which in this respect connects the Old Testament with the New.

Three great truths derived by Christianity from Apocalyptic.

A blessed future life.

A new heaven and a new earth.

The end of the present world catastrophic.

Having now described briefly the nature and relations of Apocalyptic, I will mention three of the great truths and doctrines which we owe to it, and which have become imperishable elements of the Christian faith.

(i) The first of these is the belief in the blessed future life. With this doctrine the Old Testament prophet *quâ* prophet was not concerned. Not even a hint of it is to be found in Old Testament Prophecy. On the other hand, the Apocalyptist made it a fundamental postulate of his belief in God. To this subject we shall return presently.

(ii) Again, the Christian expectation of a new heaven and a new earth is derived from Apocalyptic. This expectation, though materialistic at the outset, gradually underwent transformation, till the hopes of the righteous were transferred from a kingdom of material blessedness to a spiritual kingdom. As this subject will come up in its natural place we shall pass on to the next.

(iii) One more doctrine of Apocalyptic, which has been adopted into the New Testament, still calls for mention, and this is that the end of the present world will be catastrophic. According to science, there are two possible endings of the earth. Either it will perish slowly through cold, owing to the failing energies of the sun, and life revert to a savagery beyond our imaginings, and the last man die in mortal strife for the last faggot and the last crust of bread; or the earth will suddenly be destroyed catastrophically by the impact of some other heavenly body, or by the outburst of its own internal fires. While science of necessity can only predict two possible endings of the world, Apocalyptic declared that the end of the present order of things will be catastrophic.

This teaching of Apocalyptic cannot fail to commend itself to the faith of every thoughtful man. For if we



believe the teaching of science as to the conservation of energy—even of the lowest forms of it—then still more must we believe in the conservation of the highest forms of energy that have appeared on earth, the personalities of saints and heroes, yea, and of the nameless and numberless multitudes, in whom have been realized the divine energies of courage and truth, of faith and of unfailing hope, of love and boundless self-sacrifice.

We shall now take up the general treatment of our subject and begin with the Eschatology of pre-Prophetic times, and speedily pass on to the Eschatology of the later centuries when Apocalyptic and Prophecy became clearly differentiated. But there can be no profitable study of Eschatology apart from Theology proper, i. e. the doctrine of God ; for on the conception of God hinges every other religious conception of the nation ultimately, though the former may for long fail to wield its legitimate influence in the sphere of religion. In its earlier stages the religion of Israel was monolatrous ; that is, while the existence of other gods was admitted, Yahweh, and Yahweh alone, was Israel's God. The claim of Yahweh, then, might be expressed in the words, 'Thou shalt have none other gods but Me.' The existence of independent deities outside Israel was acknowledged by Israel—such as Chemosh, Milcom, Ashtoreth. Each nation had its own god, whose jurisdiction was limited to his own country and to his own people, just as Yahweh's dominion was originally conceived as limited to Israel and Palestine. Since Yahweh's dominion did not extend beyond Palestine, it could in no case be regarded as extending to or embracing Sheol.

Eschatology must be studied in connexion with Theology as the doctrine of God.

Early religion of Israel monolatrous. Dominion of Yahweh did not extend to Sheol.

Yahweh was concerned with the individual only so long as the individual was living and within the confines of Palestine. When he died 'he was cut off', as Psalm

Hence its Theology had no Eschatology

for the individual and could not affect any such Eschatology as he had. The provinces of Theology and Eschatology at this period mutually exclusive.

Hebrew conception of Sheol.

Yet at this stage Yahwism and the

lxxxviii expresses it, 'from the hand or jurisdiction of Yahweh.' At this period, therefore, Yahwism, or the religion of Yahweh, could furnish no Eschatology for the individual, and the individual Israelite was left to his own hereditary heathen beliefs. Whence, then, were these hereditary heathen beliefs derived? Notwithstanding some recent objections, the views of Stade, Schwally, Budde, Marti, and Lods are to be accepted, which teach that the ancient Hebrew belief as to the soul and spirit, Sheol, and the condition of the departed, were derived from ancestor worship. This Eschatology was heathen to the core. There was no blessed outlook for the early Old Testament saint. Sheol was the final abode alike of the righteous and the wicked, and was dominated by the shades of the departed.

The primitive hope of the individual and his view of the future life were gloomy in the extreme. Sheol was the ultimate goal of all men. Here a shadowy life prevailed, which faintly reflected the realities of the upper world. In Sheol, further, not moral but social distinctions were observed: a man enjoyed a position among the shades corresponding to the social position he had held in his earthly life. That such a realm was not under the sovereignty of Yahweh was to be expected, since Yahweh was only henotheistically conceived, and His jurisdiction limited to the upper world, and there to His own nation and His own land. Thus the heathen view of the future life is not inconsistent with the Hebrew belief in Yahweh in its earliest stage. In other words, before the eighth century B.C. no conflict between Theology and Eschatology was possible, for their provinces were mutually exclusive.

Although at this period Yahwism and the Eschatology of the individual are independent of each other, they nevertheless stand in implicit antagonism—an antagonism



which becomes explicit in the subsequent developments of Yahwism—that is, when Yahwism ceased to be monolatrous and became monotheistic. When once the great doctrine of Monotheism emerged in Israel, all other beliefs, whether relating to the present life or the after-world, were destined sooner or later to be brought into unison with it, but in the case of eschatological beliefs later rather than sooner; *for eschatological beliefs are universally the last of all beliefs to be influenced by the loftier conceptions of God.*

Eschatology of the individual were implicitly antagonistic. This antagonism destined to become explicit when Yahwism became monotheistic.

By the rise of Monotheism the relations of Theology and Eschatology were essentially transformed; for when Yahweh was once conceived as the Creator and God of all the earth, the entire existence of men, here and hereafter, came logically under His jurisdiction. To the western mind this is an obvious conclusion. When once it is conceded that God is the Creator and God of all the world, then man's future life, as well as his present, must be subject to Divine Providence. And yet, though Israel possessed a monotheistic faith as early as the eighth century it did not arrive for some centuries at this conclusion, which appears to us to have been inevitable from the first. This is a startling fact which shows that man was destined by God to discover the doctrine of a blessed future life—not through logical processes of the intellect, but through religious experiences, and thus to achieve a truth for all men that shall be verifiable by all men, should they be willing to surrender themselves to a like religious experience. And thus we are hereby taught at the outset, and for all time, that *the only belief in a future life, that can really endure, is that which we arrive at through the life of faith.* But to return. Though Monotheism was implicitly at strife with the traditional Eschatology of the individual, the antagonism, as we have already stated, was not

The belief in a blessed future life—not a mere logical deduction from Monotheism but a fruit of religious experience.

explicitly felt till some centuries later. Israel cherished its heathen views of the future ; for it was not as yet a fit recipient for the revelation of a blessed life beyond the grave. Religious life in Israel had not yet outgrown the stage of childhood, save in the case of a few of its spiritual leaders : its individual members had no direct access to God, but could only approach Him through the medium of priest or prophet. But when, through the discipline of long ages of prophetic teaching, the individual had learnt to stand face to face with God, and to know the reality of present communion with Him, then, and not till then, was the nation fitted to wrestle with the hard problem of a future life, and in this spiritual conflict to win the assurance of a blessed immortality.

Yahwism destroys the heathen conception of a future life in Sheol, and prepares the way for a higher reconstruction through the development in the individual of the consciousness of a new life in God.

But the beliefs of the heathen conception of Sheol died hard. For centuries the conflict raged between Monotheism and these heathen survivals, till at last Yahwism *had annihilated all existence in Sheol* ; for since the nature of this existence was heathen and non-moral, it could in no sense form a basis on which to build an ethical and spiritual doctrine of the future life. Thus the first stage of this conflict was eminently destructive in character, but only with a view to a higher reconstruction. For while Yahwism was destroying the belief in the false life in Sheol, it was steadily developing in the individual the consciousness of a new life and of a new worth through immediate communion with God, as we see in the Psalms and kindred literature.

Now it is from the consciousness of this new life in God, and not from a moribund existence in a heathen Sheol, that the doctrine of a blessed immortality was developed in Israel. Thus this doctrine was a new creation—the offspring of faith in God on the part of Israel's saints.

It was not till the religious man in Israel had learnt



through living personal communion with God to deal with the problems of the present, that he won the vantage ground from whence, with the assurance of a tried faith, he could approach the darker problems of the future.

We shall now deal with the chief problem of the present life, the final solution of which did not loom upon Israel till it recognized the truth of a blessed hereafter.

This problem arose from the claims of the new Monotheism and dealt with the undeserved sufferings of the righteous and the prosperity of the wicked. So long as Yahweh was regarded by Israel as merely their national God, and so as one God among many, no such problem could arise. Though Yahweh was righteous yet He was not almighty; there were other deities whose jurisdiction circumscribed His powers. Thus there was always an explanation ready at hand for all unmerited humiliations of His people. When, however, Monotheism drove out these false views of Deity, this explanation was no longer tenable. Yahweh was now worshipped both as perfectly righteous and as infinitely powerful. From this true monotheistic faith the Jewish leaders of the seventh century inevitably formulated the doctrine, that the righteous must prosper, and the wicked suffer adversity.

The new Monotheism leads to the postulate that the righteous must prosper and the wicked suffer adversity in this life.

Against this primitive postulate of faith no valid objection can be raised. If the world is created and ruled by a righteous God, it must sooner or later be well with the righteous. But owing to the heathen views of the after-world that were current in ancient Israel, this doctrine could not be maintained in its large and true sense. It must be well with the righteous now and in this life, these ancient teachers maintained, or not at all; for, according to the views of their time, the faithful had communion with Yahweh only here; in the after-world

they and all others were to be wholly removed from the sway of His Providence.

Thus from the welding together of a true theology and a heathen eschatology there resulted inevitably the conclusion, that *the righteousness of the righteous and the wickedness of the wicked must be recompensed in this life*. The sphere of retribution was thus necessarily limited to this world. The inclusion of this false conception of the future in Israel's theology leads, as we shall find, to still more extravagant views in the sixth century.

This doctrine appears on a great scale in Deuteronomy and other pre-exilic and later writings. The large element of truth it embodied won for it a general acceptance, and so long as the doctrine was regarded as a general statement and not applied individually, its inherent viciousness escaped criticism.

But the time for such an application was fast approaching through the development of individualism.

The nation—the religious unit down to the sixth century.

Down indeed to the sixth century, no individual retribution had been looked for. The early Israelite was not alarmed by the prosperity of the wicked man, or the calamities of the righteous; for Yahweh was concerned in the well-being of the nation as a whole, and not with that of its individual members. The individual was not the religious unit, but the family, or the tribe. The individual was identified with his family, or his tribe; a solidarity existed between him and the line of his ancestors and descendants. From this identification it was concluded, though not always justly, that God visited the virtues and the vices of the fathers on the children (Exod. xx. 5; Lev. xx. 5, &c.), of an individual on his community or tribe (Gen. xii. 17; xx. 18), while His mercy was shown in transferring the punishment of a sinner to his son (1 Kings xi. 12; xxi. 29).



No right view of the present or future destinies of the righteous could be reached till Monotheism had taught the worth of the individual soul and its immediate relation with Yahweh. This was first done in the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

The ancient exposition of the modern doctrine of heredity was expressed popularly in the proverb: 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge' (Jer. xxxi. 29). In this the people explicitly denied their responsibility in the overthrow of the nation, and at the same time arraigned the justice of Divine Providence (Ezek. xix. 25). It was their fathers that had sinned, and they were involved in the consequences of their guilt. And from the iron nexus which bound them there was no escape. Such a view naturally paralysed all personal effort after righteousness, and made men the victims of despair. The righteousness of the individual could not deliver him from the doom befalling the nation.

Now in opposition to this popular view which destroyed all moral initiative in the nation, Jeremiah proclaimed the new doctrine of the individual. This doctrine was based on *the new relation* which God was to establish *between Himself and the individual*. This new relation was to supersede *the old relation* which had existed *between God and the nation as a whole*. Heretofore the individual had been related to Yahweh only as a member of the nation, and as such, whatever his nature and character, shared in the national judgments, and was without individual worth. The nation was a religious unit. Henceforth, Jeremiah taught, the individual was to step into the place of the nation and to constitute the religious unit. Thus in the face of the coming exile, when the nation would cease to exist, and only its dismembered elements, the individuals, remain,

Till the individual became in certain respects the religious unit no right view of the future possible. The doctrine of heredity among the Israelites with its fatalistic influence.

The new doctrine of the individual as the religious unit in Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Every man was accordingly to be recompensed in this life exactly according to his works.

Jeremiah was the first to conceive religion as *the communion of the individual soul with God*. Heretofore the individual had approached God either through priest or prophet. Henceforth the individual was to enter into the privileges of the prophet.

The teaching of Jeremiah was taken up and developed by Ezekiel. In pre-exilic times the individual soul had been conceived as the property of the family and the nation, but Ezekiel teaches that every soul is God's and therefore exists in a direct relation with Him (Ezek. xviii. 4). Ezekiel's individualism here receives its most noble and profound expression. Never, hitherto, had the absolute worth of the individual human soul been asserted in such brief and pregnant words as those of the prophet speaking in God's behalf: 'All souls are mine.' From this principle Ezekiel concluded that, if the individual was faithful in his immediate relation to Yahweh, he ceased to be the thrall of his own sin or that of his forefathers (xviii. 21-9; xiv. 12-20), and became a free man, even God's man, wholly unaffected alike by his own past, or that of the nation. And since no law of heredity could thus intervene between a man's conduct and its recompense, every man should receive a recompense, and a recompense exactly adequate to his deserts. But the law of retribution, as enunciated by Ezekiel, was still more strictly defined and applied. *For, as Ezekiel, like his predecessors, believed in the traditional view of Sheol as the unblessed abode of the shades removed from the sway of Yahweh, he could not but conclude that the perfect recompense which he taught was awarded in this life. Thus the exact measure of that which was his due was meted out to the individual in this life; judgement was daily executed on every man, and that judgement found concrete expression in the man's lot. The outward lot of the individual became on this view an*

So exact was the recompense that a man's outward lot was to be taken as the index of his spiritual condition.



*infallible index to his character and his actual condition before God.* His prosperity was a divine testimony to God's good pleasure in him, his adversity was no less surely a sign of the divine displeasure. So strongly persuaded was Ezekiel of the certitude of this law of retribution, that he declared that in the coming destruction of Jerusalem not a single righteous man would be destroyed (ix. 3-6); only on two occasions subsequently (xvi. 21, 22; xxi. 3, 4) had the truth of actual fact and prophetic insight power to deliver him from the yoke of such doctrinaire views.

In his teaching on the individual soul Ezekiel had enunciated a great spiritual truth, but hampered its acceptance and development by associating with it positions demonstrably false. It is true, on the one hand, that the individual can in communion with God break with the iron nexus of his own past and that of his people, and make a new beginning, which is different in essence from that past, and inexplicable from it as a starting-point; but, on the other hand, it is no less true that this new beginning is always conditioned in some degree by the past of the individual and that of his fathers, and herein lies the truth of heredity which Ezekiel denied.

Criticism  
of this un-  
limited in-  
dividualism.

It is easy to cavil at Ezekiel's doctrine of retribution, and yet we must admit that no other theory was possible, if we start from the same premisses as the theology of that period. If with Ezekiel we hold that God is righteous, and that all souls are His, we shall be ready to conclude with him, that a righteous retribution must be meted out to every man. If we further held, as we do not, that it is in this life only that a man is under the dominion of God, then we should be forced to conclude that every man must receive the full measure of retribution in this life, and that, accordingly, a man's outward

fortunes must be the index of his spiritual condition. Logically no other conclusion was possible, and Ezekiel, with a sublime defiance of the actual, maintained this view with a loyalty that hardly ever wavered.

Ezekiel's individualism becomes the orthodox doctrine of Judaism with minor modifications.

Ezekiel's doctrine rooted itself firmly in the national consciousness, and was variously applied in two great popular handbooks, the Psalter and the Book of Proverbs. In these writings modifications were introduced in the exposition of the now dominant dogma, in order to make it clash less rudely with the facts of religious experience. Trouble and affliction, it was taught, were not always retributive, but were sometimes sent as a discipline to the righteous, but such adversity was always in their case followed by a renewal of outward blessings (Ps. xxxiv. 19-22), and the end of the righteous was always peace (Ps. xxxvii. 25, 37; Job viii. 6, 7; xlii. 12; Prov. xxiii. 18; Wisdom iii. 3; iv. 7). On the other hand, though the wicked might be prosperous, yet their prosperity was short-lived, and was permitted only with a view to make their fall the more sudden and humiliating (Ps. xxxvii. 20, 35, 36; lxxiii. 18-20).

Notwithstanding this doctrine proved a stumbling-block in the interpretation of life and barred the way of all progress to a higher solution of the problem.

Naturally the popular doctrine was a continual stumbling-block to the righteous when in trouble. So long as all went well with him he was assured of God's favour, but misfortune or pain destroyed this certainty; for as such they were evidence of sin. Hence the righteous man looked to God to be justified by an outward judgement. If this was granted, his righteousness was attested; but if it was withheld, his personal friends, it is true, might in their charity construe his affliction as a discipline of God, but the popular conscience was only too ready to arraign it as the penalty of sin.

But it was not to the sufferer alone that Ezekiel's doctrine of retribution proved an insuperable difficulty. So long as the nation was convinced that there was



a perfectly adequate retribution in this life, no higher solution of the problem of a future life was possible, nor was there any occasion to question the truth of the current view on the condition of the departed in Sheol. Thus every avenue of progress was blocked, and no advance was possible till the orthodox doctrine of retribution was impeached at the bar of rational and religious experience and rejected as unworthy of credit. Of the long-sustained attack on the doctrine of Ezekiel two very notable memorials have come down to us, the Books of Job and Ecclesiastes.

Although Ecclesiastes was written some two hundred years later than Job, i. e. about 200 B.C., we shall touch on its protest first, as its services were purely destructive, and not, as in the case of Job, destructive and constructive. Against the statement that the individual is at present judged in perfect keeping with his deserts, the writer of Ecclesiastes enters at once a decided negative. He declares, in fact, that there is no retribution either here or hereafter: for the few sporadic passages where judgement is threatened are, according to an increasing number of critics, intrusions in the text, being at variance with the entire thought of the writer. Thus the author of this book maintains that evil may prolong a man's days and righteousness curtail them (vii. 15), that the destiny of the wise man and the fool is identical (ii. 14), and likewise that of the righteous and the wicked (ix. 2).

Protest  
of Eccle-  
siastes.

<sup>1</sup> If the Preacher, owing to his belief that extinction was the end of the individual though the race was to endure for ever on an everlasting earth, pronounced life to be naught but 'a vanity of vanities', what would he have said in the present day if, to his belief in the extinction of the individual, he had had to add that of the race also? If the individual as well as the race be extinguished, then assuredly the whole world-process becomes irrational and immoral—to the reason an inconceivable vanity of vanities!

Job's criticism of the current doctrine of retribution.

From the confessedly extravagant attack of this writer on the doctrine of retribution we turn back to one of the foremost books in all the world, whether regarded from the standpoint of literary genius or of actual influence on the destinies of mankind. The Book of Job was written at all events before 400 B.C., and its concern from first to last is the current doctrine of retribution, and its aim is to show that the doctrine of man's individual worth, and a strictly individual retribution, are really irreconcilable. Like his contemporaries (for we may regard the main body of the book as a unity for our present purpose) Job accepted the traditional teaching, that every event that befalls a man reflects God's disposition towards him, that misfortune betokens God's anger, prosperity His favour; in short, that a strict retributive judgement is enforced in this life. But this belief, Job found, was not confirmed by the fortunes of other men (xxi. 1-15), for the wicked prosper and go down to the grave in peace; and his own bitter experience emphasized to the full the conflict between faith and experience.

Human faith, in order to assure itself of its own reality, claims an outward attestation at the hands of God (xvii. 3-4); but as all such outward attestation was withheld, Job concluded that the righteousness of God could not be discovered in the outer world as ruled by God; this world was a moral chaos; hence from the God of such a world, the God of outer providence, the God of circumstance, he appealed to the God of faith, though to this appeal he looked for an answer not in this world, but in the next (xix. 25-7). In this momentous passage (xix) we have the first approach in Jewish literature to the idea of a blessed life after death. And yet the writer has not grasped the idea of a blessed immortality; for had he risen to this height he would have solved all the difficulties of the problem by making his

argument lead up to the doctrine of a future life. Clearly in the fifth century this doctrine had not yet won acceptance even amongst the religious thinkers of Israel.

And yet the main views and conclusions of Job point in this direction. The emphasis laid on man's individual worth, with his consequent claims upon a righteous God, and the denial that these claims meet with any satisfaction at the hands of the God of the actual present, point to the conclusion that at some future time all these wrongs will be righted. A momentary anticipation of this view appears in xiv. 1-15. May not man revive as the tree that has been cut down? May not Sheol be only a temporary place of sojourn, where man is sheltered from the wrongs of the present life, till God, who had once communion with him, summons him back to its renewal? In chapter xix. 25-7 this impassioned desire returns and rises into a real, though momentary, conviction :

Job's conclusions point to a moral conception of the future life.

I know that my Avenger liveth,  
And that at the last He will appear above (my) grave :  
And after my skin has been destroyed,  
Without my body I shall see God :  
Whom I shall see for myself,  
And my eyes shall behold, and not another.

Here Job declares that God shall appear for his vindication against the false charges of his friends and the false representations of the orthodox law of retribution. He declares further that he shall himself witness this vindication, and enjoy the vision of God. But we cannot infer that this divine experience would endure beyond the moment of Job's justification by God. It is not the blessed immortality of the departed soul that is referred to here, but its entrance into and enjoyment of the higher life, however momentary its duration. The possibility of the continuance, much less of the unendingness, of this higher life does not seem to have dawned



Job exhibits  
the steps  
whereby  
the human  
spirit rose  
to the apprehension of  
a blessed  
future life,

on Job, though it lay in the line of his reasonings. If it had, it could not have been ignored throughout the rest of the book. Nevertheless the importance of the spiritual advance here made cannot be exaggerated. In order to appreciate this advance we have only to compare the new outlook into the future which it provides with the absolutely hopeless view that was then accepted on all hands; for the Book of Job reflects all the darkness of the popular doctrine (chaps. iii, vii, xiv), and at the same time exhibits the actual steps whereby the human spirit rose to the apprehension that man's soul was capable of a divine life beyond the grave.

Two points here call for emphasis. The first is that this new view of the next world springs from a spiritual root, and owes nothing to the animistic conceptions of the soul that were then current.

The second is no less weighty. We have here a new doctrine of the soul which teaches that the soul is not shorn of all its powers by death, even of existence (as is implied in Psalm lxxxviii and other writings voicing the beliefs of past teachers), but that it is still capable of communion with God and of its highest spiritual activities, though without the body.

and obliged  
its readers  
to take up  
a definite  
attitude to it.

Though the Book of Job does not teach categorically the idea of a future life, it undoubtedly suggests it. That the idea was in the air is clear from xiv. 13-15, xix. 25-7; but even if these passages were absent it would still be true, for throughout the rest of the book the antinomies of the present are presented in so strong a light that the thinkers of Israel who assimilated its contents were forced henceforth to take up a definite attitude to the new and higher theology. Some made the venture of faith, and so reached forward to the doctrine of a future life; others, like the writer of Ecclesiastes, declining the challenge of the Spirit, made

the 'great refusal', and fell back on materialism and unbelief. We have here arrived at the parting of the ways. From Job we should naturally pass to the consideration of Psalms xvi, xvii, xlix, lxxiii, in the latter two of which, at all events, clear conviction of a blessed immortality is expressed. Time will not suffer me to do more than call attention to the expression of the writer's hope in Psalm lxxiii, where he declares that the highest blessedness of the righteous is unbroken communion with God; what heaven or earth has in store for him matters not. In comparison with God, all the universe is nothing; this life ended, God is the portion of the souls of the righteous for evermore (lxxiii. 23-6).

We have now done with the question of individual immortality in the Old Testament, but it will be observed that so far we have taken no account of the doctrine of the resurrection. Without some notice of this doctrine our treatment of this subject would be wholly inadequate. You will remember that at the outset we called attention to the two hopes cherished by Israel—the hope of the individual, with which we have dealt at length, and the hope of the nation, which developed ultimately into the expectation of the Messianic kingdom. In this kingdom, as originally conceived, only the righteous who lived at the time of its advent, and none others, should share. For several centuries these two hopes pursued, side by side, their own lines of development, and it was not till the close of the fourth century B.C., or the beginning of the third, that they were seen to be complementary sides of one and the same religious truth, a truth that subsumes and does justice to the essential claims of both. Thus when the doctrine of the blessed immortality of the faithful is combined with that of the Messianic kingdom, the separate eschatologies of the individual and of the

Synthesis of the two hopes—the hope of the individual and the hope of the nation—in the doctrine of the resurrection.

nation issued in their synthesis. Not only should the surviving righteous participate in the Messianic kingdom, but the righteous dead of Israel should rise to share therein. Thus the righteous individual and the righteous nation should be blessed together, or rather, the righteous individual should ultimately be recompensed—not with a solitary immortality in heaven or elsewhere, but with a blessed resurrection life, together with his brethren, in the coming Messianic kingdom.

Thy dead men (Israel) shall arise,  
And the inhabitants of the dust shall awake and shout  
for joy ;  
For a dew of lights is thy dew,  
And the earth shall produce the shades.

(Isa. xxvi. 19.)

Thus the resurrection, stripped of its accidents and considered in its essence, marks the entrance of the individual after death into the divine life of the community ; in other words, the synthesis of the individual and of the common good. The faithful in Palestine looked forward to a blessed future only as members of the holy people, as citizens of the righteous kingdom that should embrace their brethren. And herein, as throughout this evolution of religion, we can trace the finger of God, for it was no accident that His servants were unable to anticipate any future blessedness, save such as they shared in common with their brethren. The self-centredness, nay the selfishness, that marked the Greek doctrine of immortality is conspicuous by its absence in the religious forecasts of the faithful in Israel. In true religion unlimited individualism is an impossibility. The individual can only attain to his highest in the life of the community, alike here and hereafter.

Thus the  
resurrection  
as originally

Another characteristic of the original form of the doctrine of the resurrection in Israel should be observed.



The resurrection was conceived to be the sole prerogative of the righteous as it appears in Isaiah xxiv-xxvii. From this standpoint there can be no resurrection of the wicked. But the spiritual significance of the conception is lost in Daniel, where the resurrection is limited on the one side to the martyrs, and extended on the other to the apostates of Israel. In most writings during the next three centuries it is taught or implied that only the righteous shall have part in the resurrection.

conceived  
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gative of the  
righteous.

Before leaving the Old Testament we might add that the above doctrines are the beliefs or aspirations of only a few of the faithful in Israel. The mass of the people still clung to the older views. The higher theology had still to win over the nations.

Now this task is achieved in the two centuries before the Christian era, and the steps by which it did so are to be found in the Apocalyptic books of Enoch, Jubilees, Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, the Psalms of Solomon, and many others.

The doc-  
trine further  
developed in  
Jewish Apo-  
calyptic  
literature.

We are not, indeed, to imagine that these books simply took up and popularized the few teachings of the Old Testament on this subject. Not so. The Apocalyptic writers simply took these writings as a starting-point, and developed a series of eschatological systems by means of which the heathen survivals in the Old Testament are displaced and comparatively consistent and spiritual views of the future are developed. It is impossible on the present occasion to trace even the chief phases of this development. We must not, however, neglect to mention one change of surpassing importance in the conception of the kingdom, as well as some individual developments made in this period. This great transformation in the Messianic hope took place about 100 B.C., and, owing to it, a wide gulf divides the eschatology of the following centuries from that of

The trans-  
formation  
of the con-  
ception—a

new heaven  
and a new  
earth.

the past. Thus the hope of an eternal Messianic kingdom on the present earth, which had been taught by the Old Testament prophets and cherished by every Israelite, was then abandoned. The earth had come to be regarded as wholly unfit for the manifestation of the kingdom. As a consequence of this breach between the things of earth and the things of heaven, subsequent writers were forced to advance to new conceptions of the kingdom. Some taught that the Messianic kingdom was henceforth to be of merely temporary duration, and that the goal of the risen righteous was to be not this transitory kingdom or millennium, but heaven itself. From this abandonment of the hope of an eternal Messianic kingdom it followed further that not only the resurrection but also the final judgement were adjourned to its close, though in the Old Testament they had always served to initiate the kingdom.

The doctrine of a physical resurrection abandoned.

Only two other developments can be noticed. Whereas in the Old Testament and the literature of the second century the righteous were raised to live again on the present earth with glorified but earthly bodies, wherewith they could marry and be given in marriage, after 100 B.C. a transcendent view of the risen righteous is developed—the risen righteous enter immediately into heaven itself or an eternal Messianic kingdom in a new heaven and a new earth. To such spiritual abodes there could be no mere bodily resurrection. Hence, either there would only be a resurrection of the spirit, and the righteous would, as an old writer says, be as the angels of God in heaven, or else they would rise in garments of light and glory. Moreover, throughout the first century B.C., it is all but universally taught that only the righteous should have part in the resurrection.

As regards Sheol, a whole history is wrapped up in

the uses of this term. Amid the various divergent conceptions of it in the Old Testament two features always persist. First, it is a place where social and not moral distinctions prevail; and secondly, though an abode of misery and wretchedness, it is not like Gehenna—a place of torment by fire. Now in the course of Apocalyptic literature these views are abandoned. From 160 B.C. onward Sheol is always conceived as a place of moral distinctions, and shortly after 100 B.C. Sheol is described for the first time as an abode of fire, as in the New Testament.

Transformation of the conception of Sheol.

What happens in the case of these two conceptions happens in the case of all technical eschatological terms. There is constant movement, constant development; and the movement is, on the whole, towards a more spiritual conception of the future, in the course of which the lower survivals of the past are steadily dropped and higher conceptions set in their place. But, as is natural, throughout the entire development eschatological thought always stands on a lower spiritual plane than the theological conception of God.

We have now traced the steps taken by the religious thinkers in Israel as they rose to the conception of, and faith in, a blessed future life. The belief is of course still in an initial and immature stage. We have mentioned a few of its subsequent developments in Apocalyptic literature. Its further growth and enrichment in the New Testament shall soon claim our attention. But for the time being we must turn aside and consider an objection that is made on many sides to the grounds which led the Old Testament saints to look forward to another life which would readjust the inequalities of the present, and bring character and condition ultimately into harmony. The ethical rightness of these grounds has been impugned. The idea of compensation, as it

Ethical objection to the grounds which led the Old Testament saints to look forward to a blessed future life.



has been termed, has been brushed aside as an idea only befitting the childhood of religion and not its maturer years, while from the side of science arguments have been advanced from time to time attempting to show the impossibility of a personal immortality.

This doctrine a postulate of faith—not a scientific inference.

Though our task on the present occasion is confined to the historical and in a subordinate degree to the ethical treatment of this question, it may be permissible to state that if it is claimed, as it rightly is, that no strict proof for immortality can be advanced on scientific or philosophical grounds, it can on the other hand be shown that no valid arguments from the same quarter can be maintained in its disproof. But we must go further and maintain that if the doctrine of immortality could be proved with the same logical force as a theorem in Euclid, then, as Caird<sup>1</sup> remarks, 'such a belief would not be a *religious* belief, would not properly be a belief in God at all. The religious man believes in a future life for himself and mankind, because he believes in God; he does not believe in God, because he believes in a future life or another world.' This statement of Caird's accords perfectly with the nature of Israel's belief in a future life. It was won by them through religious experience, and what has been won through such experience must be preserved by the like means.

The idea of compensation ethically defensible and necessary.

Now let us return to the idea of compensation in the other world, which is said to belong as a motive of moral action to a lower stage of moral development. Crassly conceived, the idea is no doubt open to this criticism. He who does right solely for the hope of future reward or desists from wrongdoing solely from the fear of future punishment is, it is true, merely a prudent Epicurean. But such a person is exceptional

<sup>1</sup> *The Evolution of Religion*, ii. 242.

and is just as seldom to be met with as that unique individual who always does the right thing and always from the right motive. The majority of men have certain impulses for what is right, though they may have stronger impulses for what is wrong. Now it is just in the case of these imperfect characters—and to this class in some respect every human being belongs—that the idea of requital has a pedagogic value. By its accession to the side of the good impulses, the balance is redressed and the lower impulses kick the beam. Now the idea of requital is to be conceived not so much as an ally of the good impulses as a foe of the evil. Its office is to counterbalance the evil impulses till the good have time to develop and make themselves felt, and the will in this breathing space is enabled to give its decision for the higher course of action. And when this is done, not once or twice, but as often as the occasion arises, then the idea of requital comes to be inoperative and the right end is chosen and fulfilled for its own sake.

But other objections have been raised to the belief in a future life from various sides. Thus Schleiermacher regarded the interest ordinarily felt in immortality to be the sign of a selfish and therefore irreligious disposition. 'In the midst of the finite,' he writes, 'to be one with the infinite, to be eternal every moment, that is the immortality of religion.' If this is immortality, then no man can enjoy it here save only momentarily, and even then only imperfectly. To do so fully, even momentarily, would imply that man had already arrived at the goal of an eternal quest. As Kant declares, it requires an eternity for the perfect realization of the moral law.

This need of spiritual progress, which even the most elementary treatment of the idea of a future life suggests, leads us to anticipate and to enunciate the true and highest motive of immortality on which every faith-

The highest motive—that enunciated in the Sermon on the Mount.

ful man comes ultimately to act, the motive which has received its briefest and aptest expression in the words of our Lord: 'Be ye perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect.' This motive has for its object the absolute transformation of the entire man; but for the achievement of this transformation is needed—not the brief span of a few and evil days—but an immortal's immemorial years. Immortality alone is commensurate with our task and eternity cannot exhaust the possibilities of the soul's progress to God.

Pfleiderer thinks that no idea of future recompense or development has any bearing on the subject; for that a man is required here by his present inward experiences.

What seems at first sight an ethically strong objection is advanced by Pfleiderer, who maintains that the claim of exact retribution has no bearing on the question of a future life and finds all that is demanded in the present self-consciousness of man. He writes:<sup>1</sup> 'The requirement of a precise correspondence between the merit of the individual and his lot rests on moral and metaphysical assumptions from which the highest religious view of the world enables us to emerge, by leading us to discern in the inward blessedness of peace with God the highest and incomparably the most precious good, beside which all external good and evil sink into superfluous appendages. . . . He will therefore have no ground for complaint or for claiming future compensation; and none for envying the wicked their external prosperity and invoking on them future retribution; inasmuch as he knows them to be already sufficiently punished in the present unhappiness of their pravity.'

This view criticized. The better a man the harder the requirements of conscience:

This statement is wrong alike with regard to the righteous and the wicked. Pfleiderer, as you may observe, limits his consideration to the present inward experiences of two classes. As regards the former class, the inward experiences of the best men are obviously imperfect and unsatisfying even at their best—

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from Martineau's *A Study in Religion*, ii. 384.



and for this reason, as we have just seen, we are obliged to postulate the soul's immortality. The higher the attainment of the faithful, the more sensible they become of what is still beyond them; and though none may have less reason than they for self-reproach, yet by none in the secrecy of the closet are contrition and self-humiliation voiced in such agonizing terms. In this world the satisfactions of conscience are seldom the guerdon of those who deserve them most.

Nor is it true that the wrongdoer is sufficiently punished in this world by his present unhappiness. So far indeed is this from being the case that it is generally the greatest offender against conscience that enjoys the greatest immunity from its reproaches. It is indeed one of the worst penalties of wrongdoing, that the more deeply a man offends against the moral law, the more unconscious he tends to become of his guilt; for every declension in character metes out its own anaesthetic, as every advance in character deepens spiritual susceptibility and insight: and so there is none so unconscious as the offender himself of the blunting of his moral sensibilities, of the death of his generous affections, of the weakening and debasement of his will, and of the steady growth of vicious tendency over the whole field of character. Recognizing these faults wholly or in part, all nations, communities, and families, whether Christian or heathen, civilized or barbarian, have been forced to intervene with supplementary punishments in order to turn unconscious offending into conscious transgression and shame. In other words, the entire world recognizes the inadequacy with which justice even in an elementary sense is administered, and yet, notwithstanding its complicated machinery of justice, it cannot claim to have redressed its gravest shortcomings in more than an infinitesimal degree. From this it follows

the worse he  
is the more  
immune  
from its  
reproaches.

that if this world were the be-all and the end-all here, it would in many essential respects be a kind of moral nightmare. Thus the need of another world to redress the inequalities of the present is practically confessed by humanity at large, and this need forms the ground for the expectation that the future life shall have a judicial character that shall transcend and fulfil the broken promises of the present, and shall bring into ultimate harmony man's character and man's condition : shall set men face to face with themselves, strip them of their old resources for shirking contrition and evading the divine disquiet that attends on wrongdoing, and make once and for all impossible the idle pretences with which they here would excuse or palliate neglected duties and unexercised compassions.

Such a crisis can well occur on the occasion of death. Death in itself can make no spiritual change in character, but it may well be the means of removing all that intercepts judgement in the present, of placing the soul face to face with retribution and bringing home to man what he is and what he deserves in a way that can henceforth be neither evaded nor ignored.

We have now shown with sufficient fullness that the grounds on which the Old Testament saints inferred the existence of another world that would redress the injustices of the present are in their essential aspects valid for all time. We shall now return to the historical treatment of our subject, and resume it with a brief consideration of the New Testament.

Incorporation of all the noblest ideas and forces of the past in the spiritual kingdom of Christ,

When we pass from Jewish literature to that of the New Testament we find ourselves in an absolutely new atmosphere. It is not, indeed, that we have to do with a wholly new world of ideas and moral forces, for all that was great and inspiring in the past has come over into the present, and claimed its part in the formation of

the Christian Church. But in the process of incorporation this heritage from the past has been, of necessity, largely transformed. These forces and ideas no longer constitute a heterogeneous mass<sup>1</sup> in constant flux, but gradually fall into their due subordination, and contribute harmoniously to the purpose of the whole. For the Christ assumes a position undreamt of in the past, and membership of the kingdom is constituted firstly and predominatingly through personal relationship to its Divine Head.

The synthesis of the hopes of the race and of the individual is established in a universal form finally and for ever. The Divine Kingdom begins on earth and will be consummated in heaven. It forms a divine society, in which the position and significance of each member are determined by his endowments, and his blessedness conditioned by the blessedness of the whole. Thus religious individualism becomes an impossibility. On the one hand, while it is true the individual can have no part in the kingdom save in a living relation to its Head, yet on the other this relation cannot be maintained and developed save through life in and for the brethren; and so closely is the individual life bound up in that of the brethren that no soul can reach its consummation apart.

We have referred above to the incorporation of a large body of Jewish ideas into the system of Christian thought and their subsequent transformation in the process. But all such ideas did not undergo complete or even partial transformation, and we have to recognize the presence of Judaistic elements in the New Testament, in the Gospels, the Pauline Epistles, particularly the earlier, and the Apocalypse.

<sup>1</sup> Owing to lack of time the heterogeneous views on every phase of the doctrine of a future life from its origin to the rise of Christianity have been dealt with in a very slight degree.

membership of which is constituted by personal relation to its Head.

Synthesis of the hopes of the individual and of the race.

Presence of Judaistic elements in the New Testament.



We have already seen that at all periods in the history of Israel there existed side by side in its religion incongruous and inconsistent elements. On the one side there was the doctrine of God ever advancing in depth and fullness; on the other, eschatological and other survivals, which, however justifiable in other stages, were in unmistakable antagonism with the theistic beliefs of the time. The eschatology of the nation is always the last part of its religion to experience the transforming power of new ideas and new facts. The eschatology of Israel was at times six hundred years behind its theology.

The recognition of these facts is of transcendent importance when we deal with New Testament eschatology. It prepares us for the occurrence to some extent of similar phenomena in the New Testament, and makes us ready to acknowledge their existence and give them their full historical value. The mere presence of such incongruities within the New Testament gives them no claim on the acceptance of the Church. Standing at variance as they do with the Christian fundamental doctrines of God and Christ, they must be condemned as survivals of an earlier and lower stage of religious belief. In Christianity there is a survival of alien Judaistic elements, just as in the Hebrew religion there were for centuries survivals of Semitic heathenism. Let me take two concrete instances. In the Hebrew religion Sheol, as a place of social and national distinctions, was a purely heathen conception. The first decisive stage in its moralization took place early in the second century B.C., when it was transformed into a place of moral distinctions. But this moralization was very inadequately carried out. According to the Judaistic conceptions, souls in Sheol were conceived as insusceptible of ethical progress. What they were on entering Sheol, that they continued to be till the final judgement. This conception

Sheol as  
a place of  
petrified  
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tinctions.

is mechanical and unethical, if judged in the light of Christian theism. It precludes moral change in moral agents who are under the rule of a Being of perfect love and righteousness. The doctrine of eternal damnation, also, is a Judaistic survival of a still more grossly immoral character. This doctrine gained acceptance in Judaism when Monotheism had become to a great extent a lifeless dogma and Jewish particularism reigned supreme, and when a handful of Jews could not only comfortably believe that God was the God of the Jews only, and that of a very few, but also could imagine that part of their highest bliss in the next world would consist in witnessing the torments of their apostate brethren in Gehenna. Such a doctrine is antagonistic in the highest degree to the Sermon on the Mount, where a man is taught to love his enemies even as God does, and to labour unceasingly on their behalf, and to the Johannine teaching which finds its highest expression in the divinest utterance in all literature—‘God is love.’

In connexion with this, the highest conception of God possible, the conception of Hades must make its final ethical advance and become a place where moral growth and moral declension are alike possible. This advance is really implied in 1 Peter iv. Furthermore, the old Judaistic conception of Hell as a place of eternal damnation must be abandoned. Sin, according to the Johannine view, is the destroyer of life—physical, spiritual, and ontological. Now to check the ultimate effects of this process of destruction and preserve the sinner in a state of ever-growing, ever-deepening, and yet ever-inevitable sin could in no sense be the work of the God so conceived.

The theology of the New Testament with its doctrine of the Fatherhood of God demands a transformation of this Jewish doctrine, and postulates our acceptance either of Conditional Immortality, or, as Origen of old

Sheol must become a place where moral growth or moral declension is possible.

taught, of Universalism. So far as the Christian Churches hold fast to the doctrine taken over from Judaism at the Christian era, their eschatology is nearly two thousand years behind their doctrine of God and Christ.<sup>1</sup> We are all ready, I hope, in some fashion to recognize the possibility of a further probation. Some of us may only go so far as to hold probation as a purely speculative question and a matter of grace on the part of God. But there are others amongst us who regard it in quite a different light, and who cannot simply relegate it to the region of God's uncovenanted mercies, seeing that it affects so deeply the character of God Himself. Nay, they would hold it a dishonour to the God they revere and serve even to admit the possibility that He should visit with a never-ending punishment the errors and shortcomings, nay more, the wilful sins of a few dim and mistaken years of earth, and limit to a handbreadth of time the opportunities and irremediable issues of a never-ending eternity. If this were so, the present world, with all its abuses and wrongfulness and injustice, would be infinitely more equitable than the world to come.

Such then appears to be the conclusion that should be drawn from the Christian doctrine of the Fatherhood of God. By adopting this conclusion we bring once more eschatology into harmony with Christian theology.

A still further stage in the moralization of the idea of the next life. Not by segregation according to character, but by the mingling of unlike characters will the

But it is possible to advance still further. Too often those who have embraced this postulate of God's love and righteousness have conceived it in an unethical fashion, and represented to themselves the departed as enclosed in various divisions corresponding to the degrees of their goodness or their lack of it.

Now the moment we reflect on such a view of the future life we become conscious how mechanical it is

<sup>1</sup> I am concerned here only with the views of Judaism about the beginning of the Christian era.



and how contrary to all the spiritual laws of the kingdom of God, of which we have had experience.

divine education of man be carried out.

This segregation of the saint from the sinner, of the moderately good man from the moderately bad—how could it do otherwise than work irremediable ill to good and evil alike? How could the chiefest of the saints make progress, where there was no grief to claim their active sympathy, no guilt to evoke their spiritual care, no need to claim their self-sacrifice, and no trials to discipline them into ever higher moods? Or how could the sinful, excluded from every influence of personal goodness, rise out of the atmosphere of evil around him? Such a conception of the divine education of man in the life to come is wholly at variance with God's education of man in the present. If we would learn the laws of God in that life, we can do so most surely by acquainting ourselves with God's laws in this. For what is spiritually true here cannot be false there. The divine education of man is carried on by the mingling of unlike souls here, and there appears to be no ground for the belief or conclusion that it will be otherwise in the life to come.

By translation from this world to another new possibilities are opened up. Here, however faithful may be the soul and however fully it may express itself in the outward life, this expression is at best incomplete, and only prophetic of that which is yet to be. But in the case of less perfect characters the need for such translation is still more imperative, and there comes a time when it becomes apparent that further progress in this world is barred, whether owing to self-wrought or inherited incapacities or outward causes of arrested development springing it may be from the hand of God Himself. And yet, in the case of such characters, how often are the good and evil qualities intermingled in such a way that it is

clear that finally only the good will survive—that the strong sense of right and truth will in due time master the traditional proneness to wrong and deception, the inner gentleness and largeness of spirit rise superior to the temporary declensions into suspicious and resentful tempers, and the high purposes ultimately extinguish every unworthy habit and bring every unruly passion into obedience to the spirit of Christ. Not what the man now is, but what he aspires to be, is the real man, and when death removes him from this life's fitful fever and troubled environment, this is the picture he leaves behind him in the hearts of those who knew and loved him, and this is the ideal he is already on the way to achieve, armed with fresh powers and enriched with fresh opportunities.

Spiritual truths are spiritually discerned. The vaticinations of the spiritual leaders of the race as to the future naturally claim our acceptance. To them—not to the materialists or pessimists—is due the true progress of the world in the past.

We are now drawing to the close of this short survey of our subject, but even though it has only dealt briefly with the questions at issue, it has thrown some light on the struggles through which this great truth was won for humanity, and strengthened, it is to be hoped, our faith therein in some slight degree. This faith arose as the fruit of spiritual experience. It is God Himself that has placed this inextinguishable passion for perfectionment in the heart of men and assured them of their ability to realize it. And these vaticinations of future development made by the spiritual and ethical leaders of the race are the same in kind and just as reasonable as those that have already in part been fulfilled on earth. And so far as these have been fulfilled, God has made clear that it is the wise and holy, and not the materialists or the pessimists, that have interpreted His mind and fulfilled His will.

But after all the question may suggest itself: Can this great hope be a self-delusion on the part of man? If it is so, then mark well who are the victims of this

delusion. Not the men of arrested spiritual development<sup>1</sup> or atrophied conscience, not this world's derelicts and moral invertebrates, its self-seekers and time-servers, its evil-doers and filthy dreamers. In this respect, and in this alone, would these starved and dishonoured souls have gauged the measure of man and penetrated the inmost purposes of the Most High; and the hopelessly deluded would be the saintly, the heroic, and the wise, who in every other respect have led men into the knowledge of all things true and noble and divine. We have only to state such a possibility to reject it. We cannot distrust the intuitions of those whose guidance we have hitherto followed and found divinely good, and in whose spiritual insight we can all share in our best and highest moments.

In bringing my task to a conclusion let me repeat once more the lesson it enforces. It was only through a strenuous life of faith that Israel won its belief in a blessed immortality, a belief that with the passing generations assumed higher and more spiritual forms till in Christianity its transfiguration became all but complete. And what has been won through religious experience cannot be preserved and developed otherwise than by religious experience. And in such experience we not only keep what we have won, but we go from strength to strength, rising, as we advance, into an ever higher and fuller life, and the assurance of this life

The conclusion of the whole matter. What has been won through spiritual experience must be preserved by spiritual experience.

<sup>1</sup> When religious development is arrested, whether through deliberate choice of, or passive acquiescence in, a lower plane of conduct, life begins to retire from the spiritual sphere of man, and then, however vigorously his intellectual energies may assert themselves, it is only natural that he should come to doubt and finally to disbelieve his own immortality. Moreover, under such circumstances his life tends to be a burden of which he would gladly be quit, and he is at last ready to welcome the thought of an eternal silence and a never-ending sleep.

grows in the measure of our faithfulness, just as the consciousness of it grows dim if we live as though it were not, till at last the faculty for its discernment is itself lost—at all events for the time—through atrophy and disuse.

To such, philosophy or even psychical research may render some negative help, but into the full inheritance of the faithful the individual cannot enter by such arguments. Only through personal communion with the Fount of Life is man enabled to rise into the eternal life. In such communion his doubtings vanish, his assurance of a share in the blessed hereafter grows in strength and volume, and the essential interests and issues of his life are more and more lifted above the horizons of time and set in divine relations that are commensurate only with the limits of an immortal's years.



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